4/23/71

National Editor
The New York Times
New York, N.Y.

Dear Sir,

I have just received a copy of Robert M. Smith's April 19 story headed, "F.B.I. Back to Normal, Catching Suspects, Keeping Mum".

Among other things this, quite incorrectly, credits Hoover and the FBI "With the arrests" of a number, including "Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's assassin, James Earl Ray."

No police force of any character had less to do with the apprehension of Ray, or trailing him or even knowing where he was at any time. I go into this in quite some detail in my book FRAME-UP (I enclose copies of the Publisher's Weekly and Saturday Review reviews). The FBI never knew where Ray was when he was there.

True, the FBI grabbed credit so fast their taking of credit for what they did not do is in itself inaccurate. But the simple facts are;

a) Scotland Yard, not the FBI arrested Ray;
b) that was, from all available evidence, accident, not police science;
c) and the Canadian Mounties, not the FBI, made the identification possible.

The distressing truth is that although Ray was "wanted" by the FBI for his Missouri prison break, it took them two weeks to identify his fingerprints and then from records supplied by the Los Angeles police, not their own touted records.

If he'd been a baby doctor, a guitar-strumming girl, a peacenik, long-haired boy, no doubt they've have located others of his prints they should have had from his earlier crimes with little difficulty.

Even the "keeping mum" part of your headline is dubious. They "leak" like mad, and with what was none of their business about King they never stopped.

There are occasional exceptions. Where you'd not expect him to, Hoover can keep mum. When Joseph Tafe was a criminal-division lawyer temporarily assigned to New Orleans, he was arrested and charged, among other things, with impersonating an FBI agent. Reputedly Hoover takes as dim a view of this as his unclassified clerks engaging in peace activity on their own time, for which he fires them. Girls, too. But one Joseph Tafe was just this week charged by witnesses in the Berrigan case, the dubious Harrisburg grand-jury proceeding, with threatening to call witnesses before the grand jury if they did not consent to invertviews. Joseph Tafe is now, according to press account, assigned to "Internal Security". What better place for a man charged with a crime and related misdemeanors?

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg